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Jean-Pierre Cabestan

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NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translated from the French original by Peter Brown

1 This work takes an innovative and yet balanced look at the major tendencies of Chinese foreign and security policy over the course of the past quarter-century. Beyond the leadership changes begun in 2002 at the time of the Sixteenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the never-ending passing of the flame from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao, the formulation of such policy is guided by rules that are partly traditional and partly new, attesting both to a greater complexity in the decision-making mechanisms and to a process of learning-adaptation being undergone by China in international affairs.

2 In his preliminary chapter, David Lampton identifies the four dominant tendencies that are indisputable. These are professionalisation, corporate pluralisation, decentralisation and globalisation. The first, the professionalisation of those participating in the discussion-making process, is itself more broadly influenced by the input of experts, as shown in Lu Ning's chapter. Corporate or institutional—but not institutionalised—pluralisation is marked by a greater public awareness of conflicts of interest between the main bureaucracies participating in the formulation of foreign and security policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Central Military Board, etc.) as well as by a greater influence of

what passes for public opinion in this area. The decentralisation of China's external actions, as attested by the international dynamism of the Chinese provinces and major cities, has further enhanced the ever-growing influence of local bodies on a certain number of foreign policy decisions—in particular in the economic and cultural spheres and border-related issues (see the contributions by Peter Cheung and James Tang). Finally, there is the obvious impact of globalisation on the attitude adopted by Peking in a certain number of areas, such as arms control or the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

3 The work is dedicated to the memory of Arthur Doak Barnett, who played a pioneering role in this type of discussion. It clearly brings out the gains made by research since the early 1980s, and the accumulation of knowledge about the mechanisms involved in the making of China's international decisions[1]. The book also draws a certain number of lessons from its many contributions on the relations between domestic and foreign policy, as well as on the process underway of this country's integration into the international community.

4 The conclusions reached by the editor as by most of the contributors are perfectly clear: Chinese foreign policy, determined as it is by domestic priorities—in particular economic development and social stability—as well as by a concern to establish the international image of a state that has respect for international law, still defends what the leadership of the CCP considers to be the national interest.

5 Peking thus gives its backing first and foremost to international regimes that are not directly at odds with its own interests. In this respect, the chapter by Elizabeth Economy shows perfectly well why China has chosen to adopt an attitude that is, to say the least, uncooperative in terms of environmental protection, particularly with regard to the Montreal Treaty on substances reducing the ozone layer, which it ratified in 1991, and the framework convention on climate change that it signed in 1992. However, by dint of its various international commitments and also pressure from the United States, a country that it needs for its development, China embarked on what appears to be a "tactical" course of change in some areas that gradually became a "strategic" one on account of the growing cost of any backward retreat. Bates Gill's contribution to the development of Chinese policy in terms of the non-proliferation and control of weapons illustrates the reality of this slippery slope, as shown, for example, by Peking's signing in 1996 of the Total Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

6 Many would no doubt be tempted to extend this conclusion to China's entry into the WTO. As Margaret Pearson points out in her chapter on the negotiations leading to this membership, the learning process has not been easy; nor has it received universal assent. We now know, for instance, that this process has in no way prevented multiple attempts of resistance —at both central and local level— to the commitments undertaken in 2001.

7 The most striking impression one has in reading this work is the central government's ability to maintain fundamental control over the major directions of foreign and security policy. This remains true for as vital a question as that of Taiwan, as Michael Swaine shows in a very detailed way. It also holds for the centre's capacity to manage, and even to manipulate, public opinion. In this connection, we could not recommend too highly the chapter by Joseph Fewsmith and Stanley Rosen. They distinguish between three types of public opinion, which are admittedly open to debate. These are the elite, that is to say the CCP's leadership; the sub-elite, the intellectuals and

researchers; and the people. In the process, these writers show how much these various groups can influence, to different degrees, the decision-makers in their conduct of foreign policy, yet without having succeeded, at least for the time being, in diverting them from their primary objectives.

8 To take this analysis a step further, let us venture to suggest that the administration's ability to manage or manipulate opinion should be set in relation to the discourse of both the official propaganda and the school textbooks on international affairs. Accordingly, at the time of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999, Chinese public opinion had for several weeks been "conditioned" by the media hammering out a pro-Serbian (and pro-Milosevic) and anti-NATO propaganda. Similarly, the negative image of post-war Japan probably goes back originally to school textbooks and a certain press obsessively recalling the Nanking massacre or, erroneously but persistently, Tokyo's refusal to apologise for its past crimes. One could add that the popular condemnation on the mainland of the ambition of the Taiwanese authorities to return the Republic of China to the international community is in large part to be explained by propaganda. Ever since 1949, this propaganda has made a dogma of the disappearance of the nationalist regime that year, despite the latter's evident survival on the island of Formosa.

9 Propaganda does, however, have its limits, and in China, school textbooks that continue to make South Korea responsible for the war launched by Kim Il-Sung in June 1950 can cohabit with a Korean policy favouring Seoul over Pyongyang whose overall aim is to attract the latter into its sphere of influence. The contribution by Samuel Kim, showing the specific nature and complexity of Peking's interests on the peninsula, should be read by anyone following the difficult multilateral negotiations being conducted on the North Korean nuclear question.

10 In short, this is a splendid work to which our short account can hardly do justice. In particular, it opens up many new avenues for research into the way the Chinese political system, its functioning and interaction with the rest of the world are presently evolving.

NOTES

1. See Arthur Doak Barnett, The Making of Foreign Policy in China, London, I.B. Tauris, 1985, 160 p.